

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL WAYNE GRIGSBY JR.,
COMMANDER, 3RD HEAVY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM, 3RD INFANTRY DIVISION, MULTINATIONAL
DIVISION CENTER, VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ TIME: 10:30 A.M. EST DATE:
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COL. GRIGSBY: (Off mike) -- Colonel Grigsby. You guys out there?

CHARLES "JACK" HOLT (chief, New Media Operations, OASD PA): Yes, sir,
we are.

Q Indeed we are.

Q Yes, sir.

Q Good evening, Colonel.

COL. GRIGSBY: Hey, how are you guys doing tonight? Q Fine.

COL. GRIGSBY: Great. Well, I look forward to talking to you guys. I
guess I'm supposed to make an opening statement or something before we start.

MR. HOLT: Yes, sir, if you would, please.

COL. GRIGSBY: Okay. Well, I'll just tell you it's great to talk to
you guys, and I thank you guys for taking the time to participate in this
discussion we'll have. And I'll give just a real quick statement here.

As you know, my name is Colonel Wayne W. Grigsby Jr. I'm commander of
the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, part of 3rd Infantry Division. We are a part
of Multinational Division Center, Task Force Marne, under the command of Major
General Rick Lynch.

We deployed to Iraq in the middle of March '07 as the third of the five
surge brigades to disrupt the flow of accelerants into Baghdad. The area we
assumed responsibility of is called the Madain qadha, a portion of the Baghdad
province. Our operational environment is approximately the size of the
Washington, D.C., Beltway; region adjacent to Baghdad on its eastern boundary,
along the Diyala and Tigris Rivers as you go south.

Our battlespace is filled by a mix of Shi'a extremists -- excuse me --
a mix of Shi'a, Sunni and also some Persian influence, and is primarily
agrarian, farmland. Some of the major population centers in our AO are Salman
Pak, Jisr Diyala, Nahrawan and Wahida.

Prior to our arrival, approximately one to two armored companies had responsibility for this area. They lived and worked out of a base in Baghdad west of the Diyala River. While these soldiers did great work, as all soldiers answering the call do, we brought many more soldiers to attack the task of disrupting the flow of accelerants into Baghdad and providing a more stable environment for the good citizens of the Madain qadha by coming at the insurgents from a different direction, which we do now. Our brigade totals more than 3,500 (hoo- ahs ?), and we have forces working out of five patrol bases in the major population center in our area of operations, and we are currently building our sixth patrol base as we continue to find success with this model.

In June the fifth of five surge brigades, my brother brigade, 2nd Brigade with the 3rd ID, deployed and assumed responsibility of the Arab Jabour region south of Baghdad, along our western boundary across the Tigris River.

Upon their movement into Multinational Division Center's battlespace, we initiated the first of many summer offenses at the division level, with Operation Marne Torch. Then following Marne Torch, we conducted Operation Marne Husky, Operation Marne Avalanche and Operation Marne Torch II. These sustained offensive operations synchronized pressure on the insurgent elements and massed the resources of the Multinational Division Center to eliminate insurgent and terrorist sanctuaries in the Multinational Division Center area of operations.

And the insurgents we're going after, gentlemen, is the Sunni extremists, the Shi'a extremists and what we like to call the Persian influence within our area of operation.

From the initiation of Operation Marne Torch on June 15th and the completion of the Marne summer offensives on October 14th, the Sledgehammer Brigade has, up to this point -- and we like to see these numbers -- we've killed 113 insurgents, detained 364 suspected extremists, a hundred and -- excuse me -- fifteen of which were targeted high-value individuals, on our high-value target list.

We've found 91 improvised explosive devices, seized 37 caches, destroyed 140 boats, cleared 2,153 buildings and searched 8,455 vehicles and fired almost 1,023 terrain-denial fire missions, both using artillery and attack aviation in the terrain-denial missions.

As you can see, we are most definitely having an effect on those elements that attempt to destabilize the security situation. This is -- this has direct ramifications on the Madain qadha and indirect ramifications on Baghdad. As you can see, we're at the front door of Baghdad.

Now, over four months later, since the full implementation of the surge, I believe we achieved some momentum in the Madain qadha, a lot of momentum. Although it is not yet irreversible momentum, this positive momentum has set the conditions for political accommodation, economic development and essential services to progress, and we are beginning to see some signs of normalcy returning to the way of life within the Madain qadha.

I am sure that you're aware of recent reports in The Washington Post, New York Times that Iraq is seeing a significant trend of decreased violent crime. We are seeing the same in the Madain qadha and our battlespace. We've recently completed an analysis of local crime statistics in the qadha, one of

our science projects for a staff member on the brigade staff. We looked at all the reported homicides and kidnappings reported to the six Iraqi police stations in our area of operations over the last 12 months and have found a distinct downward trend in both.

Even if we see an increase from last month over the remaining two months in the '07 calendar year, the qadha will see a 50 percent decrease in both crimes when compared to last year's statistics. We think this is good. The levels would also be lower than the crime levels of 2005 prior to the Golden Dome mosque bombing in Samarra.

As you can imagine, with our additional combat power and our emplacement in key population centers and our partnership with the Iraqi security forces, we were well prepared to eliminate enemy sanctuaries close to Baghdad that could be used by insurgents and terrorists to adversely affect the Iraqi capital security situation.

Our success cannot be attributed solely to the lethal operations on the security line or the application of greater amounts of combat power. We have attacked the problems in the Madain qadha along all five lines of operation. We have applied pressure against the Sunni extremists, the Shi'a extremists and the Persian influence along each line of operation, to include security, governance, economics, transition and information.

The solution to the problems in Madain qadha requires more than just additional boots on the ground or the application of greater amounts of combat power. It requires the application -- and I'm sure you guys are aware of it -- of counterinsurgency fundamental doctrine and diverse areas of expertise. It requires projecting Army units and the great American soldier out of the large forward operating base and into population centers that we've done in six locations.

We do not drive or commute to work anymore. We live in the towns with the people that we are here to help. By doing this immediately upon our arrival, we were able to develop strong relationships with governmental, Iraqi security force and tribal leaders and catch insurgents off balance applying that pressure.

Our efforts to assist the government and spark the economy, along (with) our constant presence, have demonstrated to the population and its key leaders that we are trustworthy and committed in the cause of stabilizing the communities we work in. Iraq has lost an unforgivable number of innocent lives at the hands of extremists, these three groups. The Iraqi people are fed up with it. And now we have a new set of allies in the fight. We've got the Iraqi people, who are coming to us and saying -- and I hear it every day -- we're tired of it, we want to help, we want to be part of the solution. We call our new allies the concerned citizen groups, and they're helping us to thicken the security lines of operation in all security efforts. Local leaders are directing their men in the towns and villages in taking up positions against the insurgents. As a result, we are seeing relative stability in parts of the Madain qadha that most people wouldn't have thought possible just a few months ago.

There are two reasons concerned citizen groups are gaining traction in the Madain qadha. One, after seven months in the area of operation, the people know us and they know who we are, and they know we're here to help. And second, we have killed or captured 15 high- value targets in the Sledgehammer

battlespace. The people know that when someone crosses the line against the hammer, we will come down on them hard. They respect that, they see that, and they see that we're part of the solution.

We now have 17 concerned citizen groups totaling more than 1,984 volunteers throughout our battlespace. These groups are both major Muslim sects and Sunni -- these groups are both of the Muslim sects. Let's see, how many is it. Eight Sunni, eight Shi'a, and actually there is one that is a mix of both. We do not discriminate along sectarian lines when (hunting ?) destabilizing elements or recruiting allies.

It is very important to us that we ensure that all those wanting to participate come in with the right motivations and are committed like we are to stabilizing the area. This means there will be more economic and governmental stability in that area. They want to be recognized as legitimate members of the Iraqi security forces, as well. These are Sunni and Shi'a leaders and they're acting against Sunni and Shi'a extremists with some success. In areas where concerned citizens are active, we are seeing an increase in tips and a decrease in violence. And as more areas stabilize, we're helping local leaders develop government structures and infrastructure to hold onto these gains.

We have a Provincial Reconstruction Team now, EPRT, working to create opportunities for economic growth. With gradual gains in prosperity, we're expecting to see additional gains in security, both positives providing a synergistic boost to the other. This is the grassroots governance. These Iraqis aren't waiting for the national government, they're acting locally, which is what we're seeing every day with the concerned citizens and with everything we're doing.

I attribute the security gains made over the past four months in the Madain qadha to four prominent dynamics. The surge allowed us to eliminate extremist safe havens and sanctuaries.

If you didn't have Hammer Brigade part, the third brigade of the surge, coming out to the Madain qadha, you wouldn't have the results you had here. You would still have one or two companies coming out maybe every other day. With the brigade out here, we're seeing a result.

The ongoing quantitative and qualitative improvement of the Iraqi security forces are translating to ever increasing tactical successes. The Iraqi security forces are getting better. We know that is the key. Their capacity is the key.

Large segments of the population have rejected al Qaeda and their violent and oppressive ideologies. That goes back to, I'm tired of this; I want to have a good life; I'm tired of the Sunni-Shi'a extremists, the Persian influence; we want to get better. And finally the tremendous sacrifices made by our tremendous Sledgehammer soldiers, and truly they are our nation's greatest resource. They are treasures. I mean, they've done phenomenal -- these Sledgehammer soldiers -- a lot of them on their third combat tour.

And finally 25 Sledgehammer soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice since April 4th, and 134 have sustained injuries in combat. And I want to thank the families of our fallen Sledgehammer heroes and those soldiers recovering from injuries for their sacrifice for our country. As we approach Veterans Day, I want to remind those families and soldiers that we will never forget their

sons and daughters, and we will always support them any possible way. And with that little update, I'm ready to take your questions.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir, thank you very much.

Andrew Lubin.

Q Colonel, Andrew Lubin from U.S. Cavalry ON Point. That's quite an update. Thank you very much. Your soldiers have done quite a job in there since -- in the past few months.

Sir, I'd like to ask you about the Sunni extremists. When we were talking to Colonel Adgie down in Arab Jabour about a month ago, he was telling us that some of the Sunni groups have reached out to Sons of Anbar to try and get a little advice and some help from them. Is there any way to kind of get the Sons of Anbar and some of these Sunni moderates involved with the Sunni extremists? Because it seems -- I can't imagine these Sunni extremists are as big a group as they used to be. COL. GRIGSBY: Are you saying that some of them have reached out to Anbar province, looking for how they're doing it out there? Is that what you stated, sir?

Q Yes, sir, and that -- go ahead.

COL. GRIGSBY: Yeah, I talked to one sheikh that said he went over. It was Sunni. He went over to visit his cousin in Al Anbar, saw what he was doing there. And then he brought that back here and he approached us, on the concerned citizens groups, that they were interested in building the same type of model that we've had here to eliminate the bad people, the bad people being Sunni extremists, Shi'a extremists and Persian influence within our battlespace.

So it has spread from west to east, and we're the far eastern unit of the 3rd Infantry Division out here in the country, not in Baghdad. So we have seen that spread. We have.

Q Okay, are you able to reach out to them specifically and bring people down? Because again Colonel Adgie was actively trying to promote some interaction between what's happening in Anbar, you know, Ramadi specifically, and that in his AO.

COL. GRIGSBY: I haven't done that, because we're getting a lot of volunteers that want to be part of the solution. And as you know, being a counterinsurgency expert, what happened in Al Anbar is not going to be the same perfect model over here in Madain or Arab Jabour. It takes on its own life in the environment that it's in. But I haven't had to reach out over there, sir, because we've had no issue in getting concerned citizens groups working in a positive manner.

Q Excellent, good news -- thank you very much.

COL. GRIGSBY: But that's a good idea. No, I appreciate the heads-up. I mean, that is a good idea. I can -- I've used Al Anbar in my conversations with concerned citizens as a success story, and how they've stood up and said, I don't want the bad guys around me anymore; we want to get better.

Q Yeah, because Sunni versus Sunni, they'll talk to them before they'll talk to the likes of you and me and anybody else at the drop of a hat.

COL. GRIGSBY: Yeah, what's funny here, what's funny here, sir, is, I think it's because, you know, when we first got here, there was -- no one stayed out in the Madain qadha. No one lived out here, so the first two or three months, not much people coming and talking to us, et cetera. But no kidding, once we put the -- once we had -- we were living in the patrol bases in the community, we were taking bad guys off the street -- both Sunni, Shi'a and Persian influence.

They just started coming. About after four or five months, it was like here they come. Okay, they know we're going to help. They want to help, they're tired of living this way. We're not traitors, we're helping them out. So they were just very, very pleased to start coming to us, and it's just increased incredibly since that time frame.

Q Yeah, the biggest question I always ran into was people asking, how long are you going to stay, and can you stay longer.

COL. GRIGSBY: That's exactly what it is. That's exactly what it is. They ask you how long are you going to stay, and of course, all of our soldiers say, hey, we're here to help you and help you get a better life, because, frankly, the concerned citizens groups are also a good safety security mechanism for coalition force soldiers. I mean, because we all know this concerned citizens group is the ticket. I mean, we all know that the insurgent, the thing he's most feared about is when the people get their stuff together -- the people being the local Iraqis -- when they get their stuff together and they say, "I don't want you anymore," they can't hide in there anymore. We've always known that was it. It's just a matter of getting in there and getting this population control thing moving, and concerned citizens groups is just a tactic under population control that we're able to use to help us get the people get their stuff together. And they'll eventually go into the IPs or public work battalions, and then -- I mean, we'll get this thing really moving.

MR. HOLT: All right. Great.

Q Thank you.

MR. HOLT: And Richard.

Q Hello. This is Richard Lowry. I'm an independent author, author of the "Marines in the Garden of Eden." I have noticed that stories coming out of Baghdad in the last six to eight weeks are increasingly more about Iraqi security forces in the lead doing operations, and we all know that the key to an American -- the Americans coming home is the Iraqi security forces standing up and doing the work, the daily work. In your area of operations, are you seeing or are you having more shifting of responsibility to the Iraqi security forces with support from the Americans instead of the Americans in the lead? COL. GRIGSBY: What I'm seeing -- the answer to your question is yes, I am, and here's some reasons why. Out with the G-3 or the 1st Infantry Division in Tikrit, the Sunni Triangle, for OAF-2, when we just building the Iraqi security forces, and I would tell you from OAF-2 to where I am now, the Iraqi security forces have gotten exponentially better. They're incredible. They're getting better now. Now we have national -- we don't have Iraqi army out here in Hammerland; we have the national police and the IPs. But the national police has gotten better. Do they have a ways to go? Sure. Out here -- I talk of my battlespace -- specifically because this is really the first time that a coalition force unit that partnered with these two national police brigades, but they are getting better.

Just today -- you know, you asked this question, just today we did a combined operation up in north of Nahrawan, a Shi'a extremist foothold. We did a combined operation with the national police company working with a troop of the Hammer Brigade, and my battle buddy, Command Sergeant Major Pearson, was up there and he was just impressed with the way the national police were conducting bounding overwatch, were conducting the searches. They are doing it; we're doing it hand in hand right now. In some areas -- in -- just here in Diyala, 3-1 Cav did an Operation Comanche Swarm today, where the national police were in front and conducting the searches of the houses and doing that.

And then in this other portion of our area, we're not quite at that level yet, but we're getting there. So there's no, yes, we're getting better all over the place or no, it stinks. It depends on the area. But within Hammer's battlespace, I've seen us doing -- where the national police are getting it done in that manner and where we're continuing to work with them a little in another part of the area. So it's a mix, but over all, between OAF-2 and 5, I've seen an incredible amount of change to the good.

Q Now, the Iraqi National Police are part of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense?

COL. GRIGSBY: I can't -- you know, I don't work at that level, sir, I work at -- in the Hammer Brigade's battlespace, and I don't really touch into that piece, sir.

Alls I can tell you is, working with the national police, they are getting better. I don't think they're quite as good as the Iraqi army units in my battlespace, what I've heard of the Iraqi army units, but they are getting better.

Q Well, they --

COL. GRIGSBY: But I haven't seen that friction in my -- I haven't seen that -- I don't see that friction, because in my battlespace, I just work with the national police. I don't work at that level where that friction would be at.

Q A trend of improvement is all we could hope for, I guess.

Thank you, sir.

COL. GRIGSBY: Well, I -- well, like I said, sir, I've seen a big difference -- I've seen a difference between OIF 2 and 5, but I've seen a difference between the first couple months of OIF 5 to where I am right now. We weren't having national police leading combat patrols and leading cordon and searches four months ago. We weren't seeing that. And just today, I just heard in my office update, we had two missions today where one they were doing together and the other one they were leading on the cordon and search.

Q Great.

COL. GRIGSBY: So that -- I hope that answers your question.

Q Yes, it does.

MR. HOLT: All right. Jarred?

Q Yes, sir. Thanks for your time.

Could you give us a few more of the specifics -- you know, you've given a lot of generalities, which all is for the good. We know that, we know the trend is positive, but could you give us more -- some more on the good -- your dealings, maybe, with the city councils, the regional councils, the economic projects that are coming up, more of the concerns with this integration, that kind of thing.

COL. GRIGSBY: Oh, (yeah ?), no problem. Yes, sir. No problem. I -- okay, as far the governance and economics -- and we all know that is really the big -- I mean, that is really -- once you get that going, it -- you know, in counterinsurgency, you give the people something to go to, not the insurgents -- that's the real key.

Out here in the Madain qadha, they already had a Madain qadha council already established before we got here. They already had a mayor. They already had four nahiya already established, with nahiya council members, and they were conducting government before we got here, because there was no one out here. So they had to figure it out, and in an agrarian area where water is the biggest piece.

What we've tried to do is to help them -- they already knew how to run a meeting, they already knew how to use money, and they knew how to do bids for different projects. So what we tried to do initially -- before we had a secretary of State rep out here, which we have now, initially we were helping them understand their connection back to the Baghdad governor and back into the Baghdad province to get DGs and ministers to come out here and see what we're doing and bring their help out here.

And then we were also, frankly -- I was able to help them with money and help them get projects going in a positive manner. We've spent almost \$18 million out here since we've got here in the Madain qadha, helping them. The majority of -- 49 percent of those projects have been water, helping them get the water figured out and et cetera, and another 25 percent has been the improvement of roads and routes and et cetera, all helping the people.

But now, because the security level has gotten better, we now have an EPRT rep, a Mr. Pat White (sp), who -- from the Defense -- from the secretary of State, is out here helping us. And matter of fact, he's at an EPRT conference right now in Baghdad working with the mayor of the Madain qadha. We're also getting a USAID rep that will be coming out and helping us and an agriculture rep that can come out and help us. We see this as -- we're going to -- this is going to take off. I have another \$25 million worth of projects lined up and ready to go. It's just a matter of getting them approved. We see this as the strength, especially with the security level going down to a lower level.

MR. HOLT: Okay. Any other questions? Got any follow-ups?

Q No, just a comment. I've always said that the real solution in Iraq was to have a McDonald's on every corner, and I think that just sums up what you were saying about the economy.

COL. GRIGSBY: Yeah. Oh, absolutely. I mean -- how can I put it? I mean, we're helping them build, you know, state-owned businesses to help them get jobs, because as you go with the concerned citizens, you know, when the

concerned citizens -- some of them become IPs, we want the rest of them to go into state-owned jobs, public works battalions, so the insurgents cannot pay them. We will pay them. Their county, their government, the Madain qadha will pay them, and that's what we're working very aggressively to help them, to give them an alternative.

And like I said, out here in Madain qadha, they had a government. It's pretty incredible. We just didn't want to screw it up. They had one established. Back in OIF 2, they didn't even know how to run a meeting where I was in Tikrit, working with General Batiste. I mean, he tried to understand this is how you run a meeting, this is how you do a budget. These guys already had this figured out. They understand that. They hold press conferences after their meetings. I mean, they figured it out, though. Once the security level gets down to a level which it's starting to get to, you know, the crime has gone down exponentially -- I see this with the State Department reps here now, USAID, agriculture -- it's going to take off.

Q Colonel, a quick question. Andrew Lubin again. When we were out in Anbar, within about six months we saw the salaries increase almost 20 percent. Are you seeing the same type of economic growth in your AO also?

COL. GRIGSBY: That's a great question, sir. I'm going to go out and ask. I don't know the answer to that.

Q Okay.

COL. GRIGSBY: I do not know the answer to that. But that is a good metric that I could use to ask that, because I know our guys have researched it. We're trying to figure out how much a guy gets paid to work at the -- we have a big brick factory up near Nahrwan, and we're trying to figure out how much an individual gets paid to work in the brick factory and then also how much is the Shi'a extremists having to take off the top of their payment to provide their security. You know, we're trying to figure those dynamics out so we can get in there and get a wedge in there and figure it out.

But that's a good question. I can get back with you on that if you like or I'll get that information to you.

Q Yeah, please --

COL. GRIGSBY: I don't have the answer to that.

Q Yeah, if we have the time, because what happened in Anbar and happened in Ramadi is basically the salaries went from about \$6 or \$8 a day to \$8 to \$10-plus. And the growth is such that the workers now, guys making bricks and picking up trash in the streets and doing that kind of stuff, are making --

COL. GRIGSBY: Yeah.

Q -- (almost the same ?) as the IPs and IAs.

COL. GRIGSBY: Yeah. That's a good metric. That's a good metric. I'll look at that. Thanks. Thanks for that heads-up.

Q Appreciate that. Yeah, if you could just contact -- you know, give it to Commander Anderson and he'll pass it on back to us.

COL. GRIGSBY: Okay. Got it.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir.

Q Hey, Colonel, just a quick question. David Mays from American Forces Press Service. You folks are deployed out of Benning, correct?

COL. GRIGSBY: Yeah, right, out of Fort Benning, home of the infantry.

Q Okay, perfect.

MR. HOLT: All right, sir. Thank you very much. Colonel Wayne Grigsby, commander, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 3rd ID, Multinational Division-Center. Thanks for being with us today. And hopefully we can speak again soon.

COL. GRIGSBY: Yeah, whatever you guys need.

I mean, it's just -- it's an honor to serve these soldiers. Like I tell everybody, this 18-, 19-year-old kid, he's our treasure. He's our blood treasure. He's our most prized resource that our country has. They're just incredible kids, and their families that are supporting us as we're over here conducting our business. It's just an honor to serve these kids.

END.